BULB GROWING
A Great Dutch Industry

HOW BLOOMS ARE GATHERED

DUTCH GROWERS ARE FAMOUS FOR AMARYLLIS

A FINE TULIP FIELD

FROM very early times the people of Holland have been famed for their horticultural achievements. Indeed, it will be no exaggeration to say that over a long period they practically kept the art of gardening alive in Europe. Today the Dutch people are well up in line with the wealthy and larger nations of the earth in this direction. But there is one point upon which the Netherlands may be said to stand alone—its unquestioned supremacy as the bulb-producing country of the world. The reason for this may be found in two circumstances. Firstly, the age of the industry, which has given the growers such a grasp of the whole subject as to give them a great advantage over more recent competitors, and, in the second place, the out and out suitability of the soil in Holland for the culture of all kinds of bulbuous plants.

As is well known the larger part of Holland consists of a flat sandy plain which has been wrested from the bed of the ocean. Nearly all Holland is below the level of the sea and would quickly be flooded with water were it not for the embankments which keep the waves in check on the ocean side and the busily pumping windmills which draw up the accumulated inland moisture into elevated canals in the interior. The whole country therefore never knows the meaning of the word drought, while on account of the excessively light nature of the soil the drainage is perfect.

Undoubtedly the time of all others to pay a visit to a Dutch bulb farm is in the early spring. Then the whole district, of which the city of Harlem may be taken as a center, is simply aglow with loveliness. In such a flat land, extensive views are not easy to obtain. Let us therefore accept the invitation of a bulb grower and go over the farm with its owner. A closer examination of the patches of color which were seen just now from a distance, reveals the fact that each is composed of thousands of separate blossoms. These flowering bulbs are planted with a wonderful regularity, being drawn up in rigid lines like so many soldiers. All those bulbs of a like age are placed in sections together and this method of planting produces rather a singular effect. Starting at one end of this long row of hyacinths are the one-year-old bulbs, these have produced nothing but tufts of green leaves. After a few yards one comes to the bulbs in the second year. Most of them have distinguished themselves with a small blossom. In the case of the three-year-old plants the blossoms are much finer and so the flowers go on gradually increasing in fineness as we walk from section to section until at the end of the row one finds the bulbs which are in their sixth or seventh year. Thus it takes seven years to grow a marketable hyacinth bulb. The same manner of planting is followed in the case of both tulips and narcissi, although in these instances the length of the time to produce a mature bulb is not so great. But one's curiosity is excited as to how the original bulbs are obtained and this question opens up one of the most interesting chapters in the history of bulb growing.

With tulips and narcissi the available methods of increase are decidedly slow. The grower is entirely dependent for fresh stock upon the offshoots which the parent bulbs annually produce. In the case of hyacinths a kindly provision of nature has made the propagation of bulbs in large numbers an extremely simple matter. Each season the grower selects a number of his largest hyacinth bulbs and sets these aside for the purpose of increasing his stock. The bulbs are technically known as mothers and in dealing with them one of the two methods is adopted—crossing and scooping. In the case of the former the base of the bulb is cut across in four or five different sections with a sharp knife. In the latter instance the whole of the root end of the bulb is scooped away thus leaving a circular cavity. Whichever process may be adopted the mother bulbs are carefully stored away in a perfectly dry place. When most of the moisture has passed away from the bulb a strange thing happens. At the base of each mother bulb a number of tiny bulbils begin to put in an appearance; as the weeks go by these increase very rapidly both in size and number. With the advent of the planting season each mother, with her offsprings attached, is placed out into the ground and as soon as the warm weather sets in the bulbils commence to grow on their own account, every one sending up a long green shoot. When the usual time for harvesting the bulbs arrives it will be found that the mothers have well nigh rotted away, but in their place are to be found several dozen little hyacinth bulbs. These are dried off and stored away to await the autumn planting, when they will take their place at the bottom of the long row to be moved up into a fresh section every year until they are fully matured bulbs.

The most arduous duties of the bulb farmer consist in the annual lifting and planting of the crop. Every bulb is taken from the soil and replaced once in each year. After blooming time the first few days of really warm weather soon cause the green sap in the leaves of the bulbs to begin its return journey to its underground storehouse. When the crop is judged to be in a ripe condition small armies of workers picturesquely clad, attired in long smocks and wooden shoes, sally forth to the fields. One is struck by the complete absence of digging utensils among the little companies. As a matter of fact, spades and forks are never used in the bulb raising operations, the whole business being carried out entirely by hand. In order to prevent damage by frost, the surface of the fields is buried to a depth of five or six inches with straw and other litter. When the warm weather sets in this cover is removed and some bulbs are found already to be sending up pale green shoots.

CANALS TAKE PLACE OF ROADS ON A DUTCH BULB FARM

The desire for novelties in the horticultural world has of course affected the Dutch bulb growers. In all large establishments a certain portion of the ground is devoted to experiments incident to the search of new varieties. Apart from the fact that all the bulbs will at times produce offshoots which exhibit a certain difference from the parent, the only way in which new varieties may be obtained is through the agency of seed. The interesting process of artificial cross fertilization is resorted to, but from the beginning to the end the whole process of raising bulbs from seed is one requiring an immense amount of patience. By the transference of the pollen from one blossom to another the experimenter hopes to influence the resulting seeds in a certain manner. But he can be by no means sure of this.

The prices for novel varieties change, but for new specimens of narcissi from $50 to $250 per bulb have been obtained and the fact is remarkable that many of the varieties have commanded these high prices for several years and still show but small signs of reduction.

Such sums as are mentioned above are small in comparison with prices which were paid for tulip bulbs during the historic "tulipomania" which swept over the Dutch people in the early part of the seventeenth century. A single bulb of a variety known as Semper Augustus realized the immense sum of $2,500. All kinds of bulb plants are largely grown, the smaller bulbs, such as snowdrops, crocuses and scillas are produced in huge quantities, while later on in the year the landscape in the bulb country is brilliant with ranunculi, irises, and gladioli. On some of the larger establishments a great variety of greenhouse roots and bulbs are under glass.

The growing of tulips is a splendid example of an industry not devoid of esthetic charm. Not without reason may it be urged, however, that the cultivation of any flower is a vocation of interest. In the case of the tulip there is the added intellectual quality of a history that forms a most striking chapter in the chronicle of modern finance.

NO OBJECTIONS FROM TONY

"Lovable Little Chap" Probably Would Not Have Minded a Succession of Tunnels.

Being Sunday evening, and the races having taken place that afternoon, the trains were packed. In one compartment a little boy had been standing all the way, but before the journey had proceeded much farther Mrs. Jones kindly took him on her knee.

"Were you very frightened, dear, as we passed through the tunnel?" the gentle lady asked.

"Not much," replied the little boy, shyly.

"But I thought you trembled a little as I kissed you," remarked Mrs. Jones, who was not even middle-aged yet. "And what's your name?"

"Tony," came the answer.

"Then you're a very lovable little chap! And how old are you?"

"Twenty-five, ma'am."

And Tony Spurs, the lightweight jockey, slid to the floor to the accompaniment of a piercing scream.—Answers

Nothing Hard About That.

"The woman I marry," he said, "must be able to blush." "Oh," she replied, "I can do that. I blush every time I am seen anywhere with you."—San Francisco Chronicle.

Some men give a dollar with one hand and grab two with the other.

But it takes a woman to keep a secret she doesn't know.

ARTEMUS OUTDONE.

"Who says there are no women humorists?"

"I don't know. Why?"

"My typewriter spells as funnily as Artemus Ward in his palmiest days."

Doing is the great thing. For if, resolutely, people do what is right, in time they come to like doing it.—Ruskin.

Manoeuvres of The Humorists

A DOMESTIC PROBLEM.

The prospective bride and groom (colored) were not known to the minister, and so, to perform the ceremony conscientiously, he asked a lot of questions. The man, he learned, had come recently from the south and was working in a hotel in town where his desired bride was a waitress.

"Have you been married before?" to the conventional black.

"Yas, sah."

"Wife living?"

"Yas, sah."

"Where is she?"

"Down south, sah."

"Why doesn't she live with you?"

"Well, sah, she lef' me."

"Why did she leave you?"

"Don' rightly know, sah. I was away when she lef'."

And they sought another minister.—Everybody's Magazine.

A Popular Girl.

"Yes; she has promised to be mine some day."

"But when?"

"She can't exactly say as yet. Seems she will first have to break off four or five other engagements."

MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

"They're clean daft," said a Yorkshire collier, as he stood watching a wedding party leaving the church opposite. "Fancy chuckin' all that confetti abart. It's a crool shame I calls it."

"But why?" answered an interested looker-on; "it seems to me a cheap and harmless way of showing friendly feeling."

"Cheap, mebbe, but not harmless," said the collier, gloomily. "Before confetti wor invented there used to be enough rice chucked abart here to satisfy the appetites of all my pidgins; but now they're pinin' away, and Ah'm thinkin' o' makin' 'em into pies, an' startin' to keep ostriches, which can eat owt—even bits o' colored paper—an' thrive on it."—Ideas.

In Control.

"A man always like to feel that he is in a position to reward his friends and punish his enemies."

"That's true," replied Senator Sorghum; "sometimes I am tempted to take a position as janitor of a big building."

DELIGHTFULLY SITUATED.

Jeremy Sanderson, the well-known sociologist of Duluth, was condemning the international marriage.

"Those foreigners that take our girls," said Mr Sanderson, bitterly "are well off—well off, I mean, in the Calhoun use of the term.

"H Clay Calhoun, testifying in a case in court, spoke of one Washington White as 'well off.'

"'Now, witness,' said the cross examining lawyer, 'when you declare White to be well off what do you mean? Is he worth $10,000?'

"'No, sah. Mah gracious, no.

"'Is he worth $1,000?'

"'No, sah; he ain't worf 17 cents.

"'Then how is he well off?'

"'Bekase, sah, his wife am a No 1 washlady and keeps the hull family in bang-up style.'"—Washington Star.

Willing to Be Persuaded.

"Are you in favor of government ownership?"

"It all depends," replied Dustin Stax, "on how much the government could be persuaded to pay for the privilege of owning some of the things I control."

WHY THE DOG HOWLED.

He was a poor, miserable looking dog, and the stranger's heart was filled with pity. For the dog was howling, and it was only too evident that he was suffering pain. So he asked the tired rustic who lounged near by why the dog howled.

"'Im?" asked the rustic. "E's just lazy, that's all."

"But laziness doesn't make a dog howl, surely?" queried the benevolent one.

"Does 'im," said the tired owner. "Only lazy."

"But how," queried the persistent questioner, "how can laziness make him howl?"

"Well, you see," said the rural lounger, "that pore dog is sittin' on some real tough thistles, and 'e's too lazy to get off, so 'e just sits there and 'owls 'cause it 'urts so."—Tit-Bits.

Courteous Rejoinder.

"I wonder why Solomon was considered the wisest man?" asked Mr. Meekton's wife.

"Probably, my dear, because he had so many wives to give him good advice."